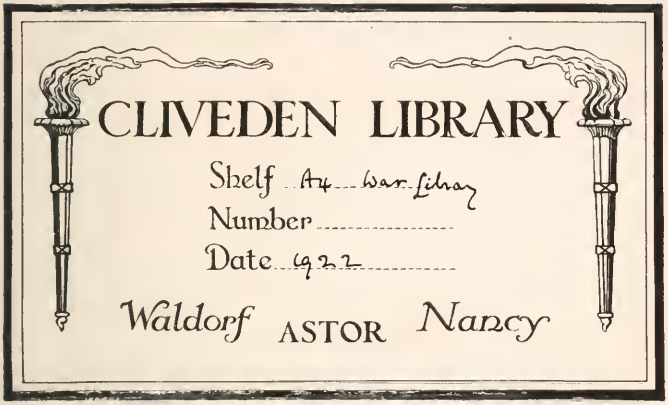
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# A MESSAGE FROM MESOPOTAMIA

# A MESSAGE FROM MESOPOTAMIA

BY

THE HON. SIR ARTHUR LAWLEY

G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

LONDON NEW YORK TORONTO

MCMXVII

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BRUNSWICK ST., STAMFORD ST., S.E.,
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

# FOREWORD

My experience of America is that of the making of speeches there is no end. They are generally bad ones.

Recently I was called on quite suddenly and unexpectedly to address an educated audience on "Antarctic Exploration," a subject of which I am profoundly ignorant. The result was not happy, and I was fully conscious of the sorry incoherence of my remarks.

"Your speech, Sir!" said a candid listener, "was like a jig-saw puzzle!"

I acquit him of any intention to flatter me. The simile was apt!

And now I ask myself, "Is this little written effort only another 'jig-saw' puzzle?" Well! it is just a stitching together of leaves torn from a diary of fitful jottings. It is a bundle of odds and ends, of scraps and sketches!—an outline here;

a touch of colour there! The most trivial of happenings is recorded. The pettiest trifles are told. And as I believe persons not wholly deficient in intelligence have been known to find occupation and interest in a jig-saw puzzle, so perhaps my readers may find some slight measure of interest in piecing together my odds and ends, my scraps and scrawls, and creating for themselves the form and the atmosphere and the colour of this strange land of mystery—the "Land of the Two Rivers."

In the publication of this little book, however, I have, I confess, an even more ambitious purpose in view.

There are thousands of men and women in England who have serious misgivings as to the conditions under which those near and dear to them are serving in Mesopotamia.

"Is it well with them?" they ask. To them I answer, "Yes! It is well!"

All that human foresight and care and organization can do, all that expenditure

of money can accomplish, is being done to ensure that all shall be well with our lads in that far-off land of Irak.

No human being, no Body Corporate is infallible.

No human organization but has its weakness.

No human work is wholly free from flaw.

Occasions there must be over and over again where the welfare, perhaps the life of the individual, has to be sacrificed to the military exigency of the moment.

Quite unforeseen and unpreventable contingencies may arrive to upset the calculations and defeat the purposes of the finest organization in the world. But what human agency can do to ensure the welfare of the troops and the proper care of the sick and wounded is being done to-day.

A campaign in the Tigris Valley is fraught with difficulty and danger owing to the physical conditions which prevail in that country. But the steps which have now at last been taken to minimize the risks

and ensure the well-being of our men seem to me to be wise and adequate.

And so I put forth these lines as a message of reassurance.

I have written of the transport of our wounded from the moment they are stricken, and of the treatment which they receive at the several medical units up and down the river. I have spoken of the efficiency of the hospital organization.

Finally, I have tried to give to my readers a fair idea of the great part which was played in the earlier days by the Order of St. John, and later by the Order hand-in-hand with our Red Cross organization in making that efficiency yet more efficient.

I feel that I have written of Red Cross work with unnecessary and unaccustomed modesty! Not that the work is mine. It is not! It is the work of others. And that it should have been carried to so successful an issue is due to the ability and the devotion of Colonel Jay Gould, Major S. M. Moens, and the good men and true who have kept

the Red Cross flag flying in times of great difficulty and trial.

As to the quantity of the work achieved, a statistical record of what has been done up to January 31 of this year is bound up in this volume.

As to its quality, let me quote the words of the Army Commander written to me on the eve of my departure—

General Headquarters,
Mesopotamia,
*March* 18, 1917.

"My dear Lawley,

"As you are shortly going to leave Mesopotamia on completion of your tour here, I should like to take this opportunity of sending you one line to say how much we all appreciate the excellent and thorough work which the Red Cross is doing in connection with this campaign.

"First and foremost I must mention the invaluable assistance which we have received from the fleet of motor launches which have been so kindly placed at our

disposal. I can testify personally to the fact that these launches were the means of minimizing much pain and suffering during the latter part of last summer at a time when our medical arrangements were not so fully developed as they are now. But it is not only with regard to this water transport that I have to speak. The Red Cross has earned for itself a good name, not merely in this great War, but in connection with the campaigns which have gone before; and I venture to think that the work done by it out here will bear favourable comparison with even its most brilliant efforts in other fields. Through its agency we have been supplied constantly and liberally with stores of the most necessary kind, and these stores, when asked for, have always been forthcoming at the shortest notice, and have been promptly delivered.

"I am, therefore, glad to have this opportunity of writing to tell you how much we are indebted to the system which obtains out here, and which was till recently

under the control of Colonel Jay Gould with Major Moens acting as his subordinate. Everything possible has been done to meet our requirements, and we are accordingly one and all grateful to the Red Cross for their splendid efforts.

"Yours sincerely,

"F. S. MAUDE."

To this expression of high appreciation on the part of the Army Commander I have nothing to add.

It will, I think, be apparent that in the face of great difficulties, the very best traditions of the ancient Order of St. John and the British Red Cross Society have been nobly upheld.

ARTHUR LAWLEY.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE PERSIAN GULF

Of all the work accomplished by voluntary effort for the sick and wounded in this great War, none has been more effective or more valuable than that which has been done by the Hospital Ship *Madras*.

Immediately on the outbreak of war she was acquired by the citizens of the Madras Presidency, transformed, equipped, and manned with such celerity that so early as November 1914 she was able to set out perfected, so far as human agency may attain perfection, in design, construction and—most important of all !—control and direction for the convoy of five hundred sick or wounded men.

Having rendered services of incalculable value to the troops in East Africa, she was, towards the Autumn of 1915, diverted for service in the Persian Gulf.

She was the first Hospital Ship to cross the bar and make her way to Basrah, and for many months she was the *only* Hospital Ship in Tigris waters.

For over two years and a half she has moved on a constant and unfailing course of mercy, and it is by thousands that the number may now be computed of those who have been helped back to health and hope by as devoted and unselfish a body of men and women as ever set out to heal the sick.

During the last week in January 1917 I found myself on board the *Madras* steaming up the Persian Gulf. As a non-combatant and Red Cross Commissioner, I could without impropriety travel in a Hospital Ship, and it was perhaps not altogether inappropriate that I should be a passenger in a vessel bearing the name of the Presidency with which my family and I have been intimately associated in days gone by.

My purpose was to see so far as I could what provision existed for the proper care of the sick and wounded in the Tigris

Valley. Reports of " regrettable incidents " in the Mesopotamian Campaign of 1915 and 1916 had created in the minds of the British Public a sense of profound uneasiness as to the ability or otherwise of the Medical Service to provide proper treatment and transport for those who might fall by the way, sick or wounded.

In the Autumn of 1915, river launches and an abundant supply of medical stores and clothing had been despatched from Pall Mall to Basrah, and early in 1916, at the urgent request of the present Viceroy, a staff of Red Cross workers with an ample stock of comforts of every kind were established at Basrah and Amarah. Colonel Jay Gould was in command at Basrah, and Major Moens was in command at Amarah.

The former, after rendering very valuable help to the Joint War Committee, returned to military work in India, as it had been decided that it was essential to appoint a whole-time Commissioner whose movements and activities would not be hampered in

any way by official duties. On his retirement the Joint War Committee invited me to proceed at once to Basrah to report fully on the existing condition of things and to investigate the possibility of extending the sphere and enlarging the scope of Red Cross activities in the Tigris Valley. Major J. H. Stanley accompanied me as Deputy Commissioner.

Let me say at once that from the Commander-in-Chief in India, from the Army Commander at the front, and from every officer with whom I met, I received kindness and help unstinted. I was encouraged to go everywhere and see everything, and wherever I went the fact that I was the "Red Cross representative" was an "Open Sesame" to the door of every Medical Unit, afloat or ashore, and to the heart of every Doctor and Matron in the Service.

I can conceive of no more eloquent tribute to the achievements of our Red Cross workers during the past years than the lively expressions of gratitude wherewith I was met

on all sides as I passed on my way from Basrah to Baghdad.

"What should we have done without the Red Cross!" was an exclamation so universal and so oft reiterated as almost to become —like the grasshopper—a *burden!*

On February 1, then, behold me in the good ship *Madras*, steaming up the Persian Gulf, all things calm and cool, and *very* comfortable.

I have ample leisure to visit every part of the ship from stem to stern, the wards, the operating theatre, the X-ray room, the stores, the laundry, the lavatories, the kitchens, the lift arrangements, and to study its design and the manner in which it has been adapted for the purposes of a Hospital Ship.

Later I have an opportunity of seeing it with a full tally of sick and wounded—British and Indian, and Turk—and I can find lacking absolutely no single thing that can minister to the comfort and well-being of those on board.

Several of the Staff were through the early

phases of the Campaign, and I have leisure to hear from them something of the old order—or rather disorder—that then prevailed.

Here is an extract from the diary of one of them—

*November* 23, 1915 (the morning after the attack on Ctesiphon).

"With daylight more aid was able to be given to the wounded, but the medical personnel was hopelessly inadequate for the work to be done. There were but three incomplete ambulances, where according to scale there should have been ten. The lines of communication stretched some eight miles across country to the river, over not roads but ploughed fields, interspersed by deep nullahs and thorny scrub. The available transport was a few mules and some A.T. Carts, many more of which would have been available, if the Staff had determined on some definite plan of action. . . .

"Tuesday's precious hours thus passed away with practically no attempt to clear the wounded back to the river, and encumbered with them the situation became increasingly dangerous."

*Thursday, November* 25.

"We passed many—I might say a continuous stream of A.T. Carts coming back full of wounded—poor fellows who had been lying out in the open now for two days and three nights. I noticed also several dhooly bearers skulking in the nullahs, but on approaching them found that they, poor devils, were in the last stage of exhaustion, some of them white with dust, their lips covered with caked sores, and hardly able to drag themselves along. There was no class of men in the force who had such a terrible doing as these wretched and humble followers—certainly none who did their work more bravely or with greater tenacity. . . .

"We reached Lajj at 3 in the morning (next day), and exhausted bodily and mentally we flung ourselves on the saturated ground, and heedless alike of the water we lay in or that which still beat down on us, were soon wrapped in sleep.

"Our casualties were somewhere in the region of 4500, but there was a total lack of any 'bandobust.' Suddenly I received the very welcome order to go down river in charge of the wounded on board of the *Medjidiah*.

"We reached Azizyeh on November 29. About 8 p.m. we ran aground. Suddenly all was hellish tumult. We were close to the shore, and along the summit of the whole bank—here some 12 to 15 feet high—was a continuous sheet of flame, the flash of many rifles. We had about 40 men on board who could handle rifles, and these with a machine gun and two Nordenfeldts soon

added to the din as we replied to the ambushers' attack.

"For two such hours we endured that infernal din. Many of our poor wounded were put out of their misery and many were wounded a second time. We finally beat off the attack. We had quite a number of the wounded on deck killed. They were so closely packed that you could hardly step between them. We reached Kut in the dark.

"Altogether we had a total of 847 casualties on board the ship and the two lighters, and there was only Colonel X., myself and one assistant surgeon to look after them on the voyage down to Amarah. At Amarah we were told to push through to Basrah. The journey, which lasted for nine days and nights, was nothing short of a nightmare.

"Colonel X. was so knocked out that the work all fell upon the assistant surgeon and myself. We got considerable as-

sistance from Mr. S. A., a subaltern in the postal department who rendered yeoman service. A Turkish doctor also gave some help, notably in the administering of anæsthetics.

" Organized sweeper service there was none."

A terrible tale! I have omitted some details which are better left unrecited.

Now let me revert to my own diary.

*February* 3, 1917, we are steaming along the southern shore of Persia. It is barren and inhospitable of aspect. The cliffs appear to rise sheer from the water's edge to a considerable height and are seemingly void of all vegetation.

The weather is perfect! We are within forty-eight hours of Basrah, and it is hard to give credence to the tales which travellers tell of cold and rain and bitter wind which await us there. Soon enough, however, we realize them to the full.

The following night we lie at anchor off Fao till the rising tide enables us to cross

the bar. We leave the open sea behind us and breast the magnificent waterway of the Tigris. The river is adorned on either bank by a fringe of feathery date palms. Beyond this ribbon of green the desert stretches away to the far horizon—treeless, featureless, an endless ocean of sand.

The air is cool and crisp and buoyantly invigorating. As we move inland there are many points of interest to the "tenderfoot." Abadan, where the pipe-line ends which fills the huge reservoirs of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Mohammerah, where the Sheikh's Palace looks down upon the junction of the Tigris and Karun rivers. Beit Nameh, the Turkish house and harem of the head of the Nameh clan, a rambling, flat-roofed house almost hidden in its groves of oranges and oleanders, its long pergolas on which the rambling vines are just breaking to leaf, its fig trees, its rose garden, and belts of slender palm. Now it is an Officers' Hospital. Much has been done by structural alterations and additions; by the intro-

duction of hot and cold water systems, by the installation of electric light and fans, to make the house suitable for its present purposes. To its furniture and equipment the Red Cross has been a ready contributor. There are other directions in which the Red Cross will work for the greater comfort of all the inmates. Here, for example, is a place where a motor launch would be a great boon to Staff and patients. The Hospital is an oasis remote and isolated. On one side the gardens are bounded by the river, and on the other three sides by the desert. Some kind of transport is badly wanted to break the monotony of life, especially in the cruelly hot days of summer. As soon as our Motor Launch Fleet is reinforced, one should certainly be sent to Beit Nameh.

We have passed the spot where, on the declaration of war, the Turks sank three ships to block the passage of the river, but with complete unsuccess. The masts and the funnels appear above the surface of the stream, and tell their tale of futile endeavour.

## CHAPTER II

### BASRAH

At Basrah the river is alive with craft of every description. Never was there so motley and heterogeneous a marine! Snow-white Hospital Ships alternate with black-hulled transports and cargo ships. Fussy steam tugs snort up and down, with lumbering barges in tow; stern-wheelers from the Hooghly; penny steamboats from the city of London; electric launches from the reaches of the Thames; paddle-boats from the Irrawaddy; vessels of strange aspect from the Nile, including her of ancient date who bore the gallant Gordon to Khartoum. Native craft of every description—the sea-going "dhow" with its graduated fraternity, the "mahelah," the "mashouf," the "balum" (the gondola of Tigris waters), and finally the round saucer-like "gufa" which evokes memories of coracles on the Severn and the Dee.

We thread our way through this fleet of incongruous elements, and take up our position alongside the jetty of No. 3 British General Hospital. On the jetty I am greeted by Major Moens and Captain Gordon Holmes, two of our stalwarts who have kept the Red Cross flag flying, and I learn from them that I am to be the guest of General Sir George MacMunn, the I.G.C., whose habitat is the German Consulate, a roomy-gloomy ramshackle house as hideous as only a Hunnish house can be.

During the whole of my stay in Basrah I have the good fortune to be the guest of the I.G.C., at whose hands I am the constant recipient of kindness without measure, and whose sympathy with our Red Cross work is made manifest in many a practical fashion. Major Stanley (my "stable companion") enjoys hospitable entertainment in the house of General Brownlow, to whom we are always turning for help in Red Cross matters and to whom we never turn in vain.

*Tuesday, February* 6, at 7.30 a.m., I set

out on horseback with the I.G.C. and his staff. A delicious morning and a perfect hack—a canter through some stretches of palm gardens between high walls of sun-dried clay brings us to the Remount Camp, and thence across the desert to the Camel lines and back through Basrah City. The streets are narrow and tortuous, and the Bazaar proper is roofed in with a vaulted ceiling. The shops on either side are almost in the roadway. Groups of Arabs loll about the market-places, very picturesque viewed either collectively or individually. Camels, donkeys, mules and gharries push and jostle and crowd one another in the narrow alley-ways. A turgid stream of polyglot humanity, uttering its thousand cries in every tongue, rolls down the street. Here and there appears the khaki-clad figure of Thomas Atkins, always cheerful and always ready to hold friendly conversation in his own peculiar lingo with any passer-by, no matter to what nationality he may belong! A strange scene!

I try to learn something of the geography

of Basrah. As in Venice, the river is the roadway! The Tigris is the main street, and from it various creeks run back at right angles to the river. They are the pathways of the people and form lines of lateral communication. The creeks are also the laundries, the bathing-places, and the main drains of the city! When the tide is low the smell is pungent and nauseating. The town is laid out on no intelligible plan. Sometimes one must have a boat, sometimes a gharry, sometimes a motor-car to reach his destination.

The country is peculiar in that half an inch of rain induces a condition of complete paralysis of all vehicular traffic. Each road —so called—indeed all earth's surface becomes a morass of sticky clay, in which camels, horses and motor-cars alike slither and slide helplessly, aimlessly and uncontrollably in a state of ludicrous impotency. A boat or "Shanks' Mare" becomes the only means to get hither or thither, and the man who sets out to walk finds that at each step

his feet acquire more and more the size and consistency of a feather bed !

It is hardly necessary to point out the value of our motor launches where river transport plays so important a part. To the Medical Service their provision has been a perfect Godsend. Even to-day *our* launches (I include, of course, those supplied by the Order of St. John and the Indian Branch of the Joint War Committee) are the *only* ones available for use by the Medical Service.

For Red Cross purposes two sites have been allotted in Basrah. One known as Beit Muir is on the main river front where the Khandak creek joins the Tigris, and the other on the Khandak creek itself. The latter is at present the main centre of our activities. Here the members of our Staff are lodged in tents; our stores are packed in somewhat flimsy huts, and on a corner of the site our launch repair-shop has just been opened. I found the adaptation of some existing store huts as quarters for our

Staff about to be made on Beit Muir, indeed the work had already begun, but the plan seemed to me so faulty that I begged the military authorities to provide, if possible, some substantial houses for the whole of our Staff before the coming of the hot season.

Ample provision has now been made for the accommodation of our Staff.

I spent a long time in going into the question of stores and supplies, looking into the demands made on us in the past, considering the great increase in troops, camp followers and Labour Corps in the country, and estimating the probable requisitions which we might be called upon to meet as the season advanced, with the result that two enormous indents were despatched to Bombay and London respectively, for the supply of motor-cars, launches, clothing and comforts of every kind. It is hardly necessary to say that my request has been complied with, with the utmost promptitude.

In the course of my sojourn at Basrah I included a daily visit to one or more of

the Medical Units, which between them make provision for fourteen thousand sick, and the various other enterprises which come under the control of the D.M.S., *e. g.* the Isolation Camp, the Nurses' Homes, the Ambulance Car Convoy, the new Hospital Train running to and from Nazariyeh, also the Cemeteries and Turkish Prisoners' Camps.

Some of the Hospitals are lodged in permanent buildings, some are in huts and some are in tents. No. 3 B.G.H. is in the Sheikh of Mohammerah's town palace. It has some fine rooms off the main hall, which make excellent wards. Adjoining the palace are large hut extensions. They are solidly built to resist the heat. The roofs are thick and sunproof, the wards are high and airy, with electric lights and fans. So far as structure and conveniences go this Hospital is as good as any one could hope to find in Mesopotamia. A very competent Staff of Doctors and Nurses maintain a high standard of efficiency. Here there is a very nice officers' ward, to the furnishing of which

the Red Cross has done not a little. I laughed at the enthusiasm of one patient who was moved almost to tears at the sight of one of our armchairs.

"Ah! You don't know what it is to sink into an armchair when for months you have had nothing to sit on but a wooden box!"

No. 33 B.G.H. is in the liquorice factory, not nearly so happily situated as No. 3. It is shut in and airless. There is a mule depot just across the creek which brings an "infinite torment of flies," and on the occasion of my visit I found the wards somewhat topsy-turvied by the discovery of plague-infected rats, and consequently of course of plague-infected fleas. The O.C. and the Staff have, however, been well trained to cope with difficulties, and as in the past, so in the future, their cheery optimism, skill and courage will carry them through every difficulty.

Most of the Hospitals are in tents, many of them out on the desert. The sites of some of them bare, bleak and depressing!

Glare and dust the prevailing characteristics. Nothing to mitigate the fierce anger of the Sun God! Nothing to break the deadly monotony of life when the earth is like a furnace and the sky is like brass, and from 8 a.m. through the long, sweltering day the thermometer stands at 120° in the shade.

Nothing! nothing! that we can achieve for the refreshment—mind and body—of those whose lives are cast in a Mesopotamian Hospital through the torrid months is enough or half enough for us to do.

## CHAPTER III

### ZOBEIR

It is a Saturday afternoon, and with an old and very dear friend, who is doing work of incalculable value in the political department, I set out on a half-holiday jaunt to Zobeir. The sky is dull and grey, and a strong south wind is sweeping fitful clouds of dust across the desert.

Nine miles from the present town of Basrah is the site of the old Basrah city—date somewhere about 650. The ruins of old Basrah extend for some three miles along the road to the modern Basrah and cover several square miles. The main feature is the Northern Minaret, faced with yellow bricks which have weathered many hundred years and are still of excellent quality. This ruined minaret is a great feature in the landscape. It leans like that of Pisa. Zobeir is a typical walled Arab

town, to which the desert tribes *must* come for the necessaries as well as the luxuries of life. The desert is fringed with a scattered line of such towns, and whoever holds the towns holds the desert and the Bedouin tribes in the hollow of his hand.

We drove through a series of narrow winding streets between high walls of sun-dried brick to the market-place, where we pulled up, and at once the motor became the centre of a friendly, chattering crowd. My companion became suddenly prompted to be the possessor of a brass-bound box such as Arabs do largely affect, of which several were exposed for sale in the market square and some adjoining narrow streets. Our bargaining was conducted in a chorus of crescendo screams, in which not only the merchant, but also his neighbours and any casual passer-by took an interested and noisy part. At last the box was bought and bound to the back of the car. Then we discovered that we had not enough money to pay for it. So we determined to repair

to the Sheikh of Zobeir—who is a FRIEND! The friend was away, but we found the friend's brother in "Mejliss"—which is akin to a durbar—seated at the opening of a deep alcove which seemed to combine the commercial properties of an ironmonger's shop with the ceremonial accessories of a Hall of State.

We joined the *posse* of Arabs and negroes surrounding the Sheikh's brother, "all seated on the ground," and plunged (at least my companion did) into the conversation. Our host contrived to maintain a remarkable degree of dignity and at the same time to convey great cordiality in his welcome and readiness, not only to pay our bills, but to entertain us to tea at his house.

After some time we all climbed into the motor and went off to his home, which is of quite recent construction—indeed, only just finished. Outside, blank dreary mud-walls, featureless and windowless, but inside most attractive. The rooms are built round a

series of open courts or gardens of which one would have no suspicion from outside. The room in which we had tea was of very good proportions; the walls of great thickness; all round the room a low lounge; on the floor carpets of gaudy hues; gimcrack tables and chairs and a few hideous lamps.

One of the six sons appeared on the scene, a boy aged fifteen, very proud of the smattering of English which he had acquired in the last five or six months—a very sharp lad with good manners.

We departed about five o'clock, laden with three couple of the lesser bustard (our old friend the Knoorhan of S. Africa), but, alas! in a condition hardly suitable for the table, time and expanding bullets having done their worst.

Home over the Shaiba battle-field! We stopped at a big rambling serai of sunburnt bricks which was our headquarters at the time of the fight. The sun was setting, and our chauffeur was not eager for a drive over the desert in the dark, so our visit to the

roof of the serai had to be short. A vast expanse on every side, and at our feet line upon line of trenches marking the British position at the time of the battle. I longed to see the sun set in crimson splendour in the West, but our driver was inexorable, and I might not dally.

We bumped back across the desert and through Basrah city by the light of the moon. The narrow winding streets were dark and deserted, and their gloom was accentuated by the fitful flicker of an occasional oil lamp twinkling in its tiny niche. The shadowy alley-ways were full of mystery and sinister suggestion. In silence we glided swiftly homewards. At such a moment speech would have been sacrilege.

And so ended a delightful day.

## CHAPTER IV

### MOHAMMERAH

WEDNESDAY, *February* 14. After a pouring wet night Basrah is just one morass of slimy clay.

Moens and Stanley arrive about 10 a.m., hamper-laden with luncheon to be eaten on board the boat that is to take us to Mohammerah. Providentially General Grey appears on the scene and offers us his launch, which boasts a speed of seventeen knots, and away we go !

Anchored in the stream opposite the Sheikh's palace, we open tins of tongue, boil eggs, and minister to "Little Mary," then we proceed to Mohammerah city, where we dismount and paddle through one long puddle of slushy clay.

The Bazaar consists of a congeries of narrow twisting alley-ways laid out so as to form a series of rough parallelograms,

roofed throughout, dark and dirty, of a dirt that beggars description !

We find no inducement to linger. A quarter of an hour's run up the Karun River and we find ourselves at the British Convalescent Depot. A row of anglers of despondent mien with rod and line occupy the pier and path leading therefrom, and behind them is a garden ! A real English garden ! A stiff and inartistic row of flower-beds—mignonette, sunflowers, stocks and hollyhocks just in their earliest growth—and in the background vegetables of various kinds. Very English ! very nice ! Here the rain has induced a paralysis no less thorough than in Basrah, and we slither from tent to tent. Hospital tents, recreation ditto, clothing ditto, coffee-shop ditto. We run down the gamut of regimental institutions in both British and Indian Camps and parade the men.

Back in the cool of the evening, one hour and thirty minutes to cover twenty-six miles of river ! Against the stream too ! Good going !

## CHAPTER V

### RECONSTRUCTION

BEFORE leaving Basrah I accompanied the I.G.C. on the occasion of his inspecting the Inland Water Transport Construction Works at Magill under the direction of Brigadier-General Grey.

It is wonderful to see what has been done since September 1916, when the work was taken in hand. We find over two thousand workmen employed, of nationalities innumerable! — English, Scottish, Irish, Pathans, Kurds, Egyptians, West Africans, Indians, Arabs, Chinese, *etceteri multi*.

Six months ago the wharfage facilities would only allow of the discharge of eight hundred tons a day. Nowadays—tonnage of five times this quantity can easily be handled, and this amount will soon be considerably exceeded. In this, as in every other branch of administration, there is

abundantly evident a new sense of efficiency. The whole community seems to be imbued with the same spirit. Truly "the old order changeth, yielding place to new," and we may draw a veil over the ineptitude and the incompetency which marked the "old order" of the two past years. To-day all is changed! Communications by road, railway and river have been laid out and developed on a well-thought-out plan. The loading and unloading of vessels of every kind proceed easily and without delay. Stores of every kind are in abundance and controlled methodically. Medical equipment has been introduced on a lavish scale.

The water supply is adequate at the base and every standing camp. Sanitation has been taken in hand, and the inhabitants of Basrah seem to be nothing loath to submit to the regulations of our inspectors and fall in with the arrangements made for improving the sanitary conditions of the town.

An anti-fly crusade is being carried on which may modify the plague of flies in

and about our Camps, but the task is herculean, and any substantial diminution of the fly plague must take a very long time.

The expenditure of money must be great! I have not the knowledge to warrant me in hazarding a guess even of our monthly expenditure in this country. But the construction of public works, such as houses, stores, electric light plant, cold storage, wharfage, docks, railways, and roads are on so large a scale and of such a solid nature that it is not surprising if the inhabitants of the country interpret our activities as denoting a determination on our part to remain permanently in Mesopotamia; and it is, I think, impossible not to ascribe the growing readiness of the Arab tribes to throw in their lot with us, to the impression which must inevitably be caused by our having undertaken works of such magnitude and solidity.

It is certain that, if in an ill-starred moment when the war draws to an end we make up our minds to vacate the land, our with-

drawal will be regarded as the betrayal of men whom we have wheedled into allegiance, and will have the worst possible effect on our Mohammedan subjects throughout the Empire. Indeed it may not improbably lead to the crumbling of the whole of our Eastern Imperial edifice.

For the moment, of course, the sufferings of our men in the Tigris Valley loom large in the national eye. The saying, "It wants no fiery sword to keep me out of the Garden of Eden," reflects fairly accurately the opinion which the average soldier entertains of the country. But it would in my opinion be a deplorable blunder, if we let slip through our hands a territory which, under proper administration and freed from the shackles of Turkish misrule, might produce corn and wine and oil in the same measure as once made it the most opulent and puissant of countries under the sun.

The development of the resources of this country should some day help the British Empire greatly to meet the financial obliga-

tions imposed by the war. Indeed, I do not know whether from a political or from a purely economical point of view the abandonment of this vast territory would be the greater blunder.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TIGRIS

THURSDAY, *February* 15. I am granted a passage to Amarah in P. 56, which is to proceed ammunition laden and with all promptitude to Sheikh Saad. After an early dinner we jump into the I.G.C.'s launch, are aboard and away by 9 p.m. Our good ship belongs to the "P. 50" class, and is a paddle-boat of recent importation, built on lines that meet with approval from all the experts. Square, squat and ugly, of clumsy form and leaden hue, it suggests an overgrown entrée dish with its cover on, but with a low funnel popping up where the handle ought to be. It is not complete till it has had lashed to it on either side a flat-decked barge which not only adds greatly to the "P" boat's carrying capacity, but also acts as a buffer in the numerous collisions with the river

bank which are the constant experience of all river craft in the innumerable turns and twists of the Tigris in the narrows or upper reaches of the river. Each "P. 50" boat with its two barges will accommodate comfortably quite six hundred wounded men. Deck space is the great desideratum, and the absence of all contrivances that may impede the easy movement of stretcher cases. These, be it remembered, are ferry boats intended to remove the greatest possible number of wounded men in the shortest possible time from the field ambulances or clearing stations to the base hospitals, or possibly from one base hospital to another. Their functions are distinct from those of hospital ships.

The removal of a badly wounded man from stretcher to cot and from cot to stretcher often involves intense agony, and the universal cry of those concerned in the evacuation of the wounded is for "clear deck space and no frills!"

I have had effect given to this principle

in the construction of the *Nabha*, our newest Red Cross Hospital Ship—which has just reached Basrah from Bombay. The elaborate network of stanchions and cots has all been swept away, with a consequent increase in carrying capacity and greater freedom of movement in carrying the wounded on or off the ship.

We wake next morning to pouring rain. Cold and cheerless is the morn! The sky is drab and grey; the river is drab and brown; the banks on either land, far as the eye can reach, are a drab and dreary monotone of mud! Towards noon the sun comes out as we draw near to Ezra's Tomb. The brilliantly glazed dome of turquoise blue is ringed round with foliage of vivid green, and twinkles "like the jewel in an Ethiop's ear."

We may not halt to inspect this venerable pile. "Soon up the muddy riverway we vanish and are gone." For mile after mile we wend our vacillating way across a flat and limitless sea of mud. A dark dull day!

but at eventide a gorgeous sunset, tending to storm, brings no slight measure of compensation.

*Saturday, February* 17, finds us still on board. We were to have been deposited at Amarah during the night. The skipper had held out hopes that we should be there by 11 p.m., but it was 3.30 a.m. before we arrived. We steamed slowly up the river front, with our searchlight playing brilliantly over the dingy Arab houses, transforming them into ivory palaces of fantastic beauty. Our "siren" hooted lustily, making night hideous, but failing altogether to stir from his slumber the man whose business it was to come off with a launch and take us on shore. After dropping anchor and waiting for some forty minutes, I determined that I would not delay even for an hour the delivery of the ammunition which was urgently wanted at the front, so I resolved to go straight on to Sheikh Saad, leaving Amarah to be "done" on our return journey.

I turned in soon after 4 a.m. and lay abed

almost till noon. From early dawn the rain poured down. There was nothing to tempt a man to move. A warm bed and a novel seemed preferable to a cold, damp, dripping deck. So passed an uneventful day.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHEIKH SAAD

We wake to a Sabbath morn of glorious sunshine. We have reached Sheikh Saad—

> "Eastwards soared the stainless ramp of huge Pushtiku's wall;
> Ranged in white ranks against the blue,
> Untrod, eternal, wonderful."

We look upon a magnificent range of snow-clad hills. A bitterly cold wind sweeping southwards over the icy mountains drives me into my thickest overcoat. After breakfast on board I make my way to the A.D.M.S.'s quarters, where I am to lodge. My host is an old friend whom last I saw at work in the Indian Hospital which occupied the old Jesuit College at Boulogne. Those days seem far away now. Our present home is an old Arab house strangely squalid of aspect, standing cheek by jowl with other similar mud-heaps, and between them is a

winding path which is now a puddle of unsavoury ill-looking fluid. No wonder that Sir Victor Horsley urged that the whole pile of buildings which form the town of Sheikh Saad should be levelled to the ground and no longer used for human habitation.

My first task is to visit our Engineer's quarters, and, indeed, I am not favourably impressed. But "H. is a house!" No other is available, and "à la guerre, comme à la guerre!" There is much to see in Sheikh Saad. To begin with, there are two very fine General Hospitals (British and Indian respectively). They are tented, of course, but good as good can be, always with the proviso that they would be still better, if only existing conditions would allow of Nursing Sisters being included in the Hospital staff. Nurses are badly wanted here! There is No. 31 to which for a time J. H. Stanley has to repair with a sharp attack of pleurisy. His sojourn in the hospital entitles him to speak with authority as to the treatment which patients may expect who

find themselves within its wards. Unfortunately my vocabulary is limited, and I should have to borrow from him the necessary expressions of eulogy, if I wished to record accurately his very favourable impressions of No. 31 B.G.H.

Then there is No. 61, where I find my friend, a fellow Yorkshireman—Colonel L.—at work in the theatre on a strapping young Goorkha whose thigh has been smashed to pieces. Wonderful work this Yorkshire surgeon is doing! Marvellous is his unfailing exhibition of skill! Beautiful is his absolute self-devotion and entire readiness by day or night to succour the wounded soldier and ease him of his pain. Gallant fellow-countryman, I lay at your feet the humble tribute of my very sincere homage!

There are two Casualty Clearing Stations—one of which, No. 20, I visit in a moment of disarray when evacuation of the wounded is in full swing. It is an inconvenient moment for visitors, but at such a time one is enabled to appreciate truly the excellence

of administration which ensures so smooth and skilful an evacuation as that which I was here able to watch through all its phases. No. 15 C.C.S. is also in the programme, and here I am confronted with a formidable list of comforts which I am expected to produce instantaneously, as if I were some fairy godmother—such is the confidence in the fertility of our resources which has grown up in the minds of men.

The sanitary system is interesting. The whole area is cut up into clearly defined sectors, and in each sector there is a complete installation of incinerators, latrines and ablution rooms, all of which are under admirable control. The water supply is no less certainly assured, while bath-houses and clothes disinfectors are set up on the river bank, and from dawn to dusk enjoy unceasing patronage.

A Convalescent Home for one thousand men is in the forming, and a goodly consignment of games and "divarsions" and literature of every kind is on its way from the Red

Cross Depot to lighten the leaden dulness of life in a camp which would otherwise be barren of recreation.

Sheikh Saad was the head of the light railway which ran to Es Sinn and Atab till the army swept northwards on its victorious career. One afternoon I await the incoming of a train from Es Sinn, with British and Indian wounded and Turkish prisoners—some very bad cases among them. The train is not regarded as a bad experience. The arrangement for the stretchers is simple, the running is smooth, and excellent arrangements are made for the men to be fed on the way down and on arrival at the buffets which have been established in large marquees—one for British and one for Indians —at railhead. To these buffets the Red Cross contributed with a liberal hand.

The gardens where General Scott is busily growing vegetables for the troops are an interesting feature, and finally there is the Turkish prisoners' camp. I find them busy cooking their dinners. Oh ! so filthily dirty !

for their visit to the riverside bathing-house is yet to come, and they still have on them the clothes and the creeping things which for weeks they have had on them in the trenches. I hold brief converse in French with a very handsome and courteous officer, who assures me that he and his men are well contented with their present lot.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SANNA-I-YAT

Ash Wednesday. The river is in high flood. At 10 a.m. Moens and I set out in the launch *Silver Thimble VI* for Arab Village. Colonel Goodbody and Chalkley accompany us, but we have to leave Stanley behind on the sick list.

After brief delays to pick up duck and teal shot by Moens from the boat, we reach the landing-stage of El Hannah position and walk over some of the numerous confused lines of trenches which still mark the scene of many a fight.

The boat bridge at Arab Village has been swept away, so we can proceed straight up to Sandy Ridge, where we are the guests of the A.D.M.S. and his staff. His camp is situated on the right bank of the river exactly opposite the Sanna-i-yat position. The life of one of our hosts has for some time past

been decidedly " of the Camp " rather than " of the Court." For over fourteen months he has not set eyes on a woman of any kind whatever.

*Thursday, February* 22, is an eventful day. We wake early, knowing that at ten o'clock the bombardment of the Turkish position will begin and our troops let loose to storm the Turkish trenches. At the given hour the curtain is rung up. From the river bank bordering our camp we have a front view of the drama which is being enacted on the opposite bank. But a little way above us and on the far side of the Tigris a Red Cross flag is flying marking the " Riverside Advanced Dressing Station," and within a few minutes of the first scream of a shell their work will begin and go on until tomorrow's dawn. For one hour we sit and listen to the ceaseless roar of the guns. If for a moment the big fellows cease to bellow we hear the chatter of the machine-guns, but the roar is well-nigh continuous. We watch dense clouds of dust and smoke, now black,

now brown, now smoky white, growing ever more dense, rising ever higher towards the firmament, till it would seem as though all Mesopotamia were being translated to the nether heaven. At eleven o'clock we motor down to the bridge and across to the left bank where the two Field Ambulances stand.

We go all round them and are initiated into the mysteries of the preparations made for the reception of the wounded. We also see the Hospital Ship *Kamala*, where all is swept and garnished and clean. At twelve o'clock the first consignment come in. They arrive from the Riverside Dressing Station in one of our Red Cross launches—some Seaforths and some 92nd Punjabis—all of them light cases, and at once sit down to a mug of tea and a slab of bread and butter. Others are coming in from our Right Front Dressing Station, and they belong to the 51st and 53rd Sikhs. These men, too, we see comfortably bestowed, and then we return to watch the bombardment proceeding on its sonorous

way. At 2 p.m. we go by river launch (provided by the Dennis Bayley Fund) to the Riverside Advanced Station. A long stream of wounded keep coming in, some able to walk, some borne on stretcher. On and on all through the long hot afternoon and the long dark night. We return after an hour or more by river in a launch (another of Dennis Bayley's) filled with wounded men—six stretcher cases, nineteen sitters—to the two field ambulances which we had visited in the morning. We find that one launch load of wounded has already gone. Then we put thirty-five Seaforth Highlanders into the *Leopold and Dorothea* launch and away at 3.45, all in great spirits, for they know that they have done their job! and done it well! The *Kamala* with just over eighty cases follows immediately afterwards. We see another launch load come in from the Riverside Station, and then we go off in an ambulance to the Right-hand Dressing Station where nothing much is doing, and then in a Ford car up to the trenches and on foot to the

Front Collecting Station. Just as we get there a man is shot dead in the station, so we affectionately embrace the wall and pack the wounded as closely under its shelter as we can.

It is not until the shades of evening begin to fall that the worst cases begin to come in. Ghastly indeed are the wounds caused by the bomb and other missiles of modern warfare, and in the dressing stations and field ambulances one realizes fully the "horrors of war." Horrible, yes! War is horrible in the infliction of pain and suffering! but glorious in the courage and endurance with which suffering is borne!

The Seaforths have been in the thick of it to-day. There has been a weakening on their flank. They have been "let down," "badly let down," they say, and the counter-attacks of the Turks have been savage and resolute. But the "Kilties" have risen gloriously to the occasion, and by their valour the day is ours.

Some of them will see the glens and hills

of Bonnie Scotland no more! But their friends will remember them and speak of them. "He was a Seaforth"—they will say! Just that! "He was a Seaforth." That is enough! A man may ask no grander epitaph.

The evacuation goes on all night and it is 6.30 a.m. before the last launch has left the dressing station. The launches have together carried over seven hundred. The men have worked splendidly, and by 8 a.m. one thousand and twenty-one wounded have been brought into the two field ambulances, and five hundred and fifty of these have already gone down to Sheikh Saad.

## CHAPTER IX

### SHUMRAN

FRIDAY, *February* 23, brings great news. General Marshall's column is over the Tigris, we have completely surprised the Turks. By the heroism of the Hampshire lads and the gallantry of the Goorkhas we have established a footing in the Shumran Bend and up to the Dahra Barracks.

By four in the afternoon we have bridged the Tigris, which is here three hundred yards wide at its narrowest point, and the Turks are in full retreat.

Moens and I push across to the Army Headquarters, and take up our abode in the Army Commander's camp. We spend the next three days in watching the evacuation of the wounded from the Shumran Bend. In a motor-car we bump across the desert to Es Sinn and Imam and on by Atab to the Bridge of Boats, visiting many a Field

Ambulance and Casualty Clearing Station on the way.

As we approach the river we are in the middle of a huge concourse of troops and guns, transport vehicles of every kind, camels, horses and mules, medical units and ambulances, all converging to the Bridge of Boats—over which a ceaseless stream is passing and hurrying forward to the front.

Gradually in their turn the dressing stations are pushed across and forward in close attendance on the firing-line, and the wounded are brought in and passed back from Dressing Station to Field Ambulance, thence to Casualty Clearing Station and Base Hospital down stream.

We observe the proceedings at every stage. We see the stretcher-bearers coming in with their loads, moving to their work quietly and ostentatiously, quite indifferent to the shell and rifle fire, however hot it may be. Heroes indeed, though their names be not blazoned on the roll-call of Fame. We visit the collecting stations where the first

dressings are applied, whence the men are sent back to the ambulances as soon as may be.

The ambulances just in rear of the boat bridge are desperately busy; work goes on unceasingly day and night! In the first days of the action there is a long and trying stretch of some thirty miles to rail-head at Imam to be crossed in a motor ambulance over a rough and rutty road, but as soon as navigation has become possible from Sandy Ridge to Kut the "P." boats begin to arrive, and the evacuation by river is carried out with a marvellous smoothness and success. The difficulties of evacuation here have been far greater than at Sanna-i-yat, for the battle-line has been far flung and all men and horses and material of every kind whatsoever have had to be conveyed across one single narrow bridge. It was a wonderful performance. Audacious in conception; thought out and worked out to its tiniest detail; brilliant in achievement and magnificent in result!

And now the cry is "Forward." The defeat of the Turkish Army is assured. The aeroplanes report a rabble rout in full flight for Baghdad. Our Cavalry Division has been held in readiness for this supreme moment and now it is launched to the attack. Not for a hundred years has a British Cavalry Commander had such a chance of effective action as now!

## CHAPTER X

### AMARAH

THE Army Commander is to break camp on the morrow and to take up his temporary quarters on P. 53. No room for me, alas! so I resolve to drop down to Amarah, where I have much Red Cross work to do.

*February* 27. We wake to a muddy world, but the air bites shrewdly from the North, and by noon we shall be dry once more. All is stir and bustle. The tents are coming down. A stream of motor-cars is whirling away Generals and Staff officers of high and low degree. I, even I, only am left! It is horribly cold, and though clad in a British warm and the cosiest of "woollies," I sit and shiver. In the p.m. I seize a "return-empty" motor-car and very reluctantly turn my face southward, deriving what comfort I can from my host's promise to let me know when he has found for himself a new abiding

city in which there will be a corner for me. Faithfully was his promise kept! I telegraph to push up every available Red Cross launch from Basrah, Sheikh Saad, and Sandy Ridge. Our advanced Fleet is brought up to twelve—inadequate numerically, but making up in energy and achievement for any short-coming there may be in number.

I slip down to Sheikh Saad with Moens, and we embark on P. 51. We have the decks packed pretty tightly with British stretcher cases, mostly slight. The nights are intensely cold, but each man is provided with a "posteen" (Afghan sheepskin coat) and as many blankets as he may want. The canvas awnings are let down at night, and on inquiring in the morning I find none of the men complaining of the cold. All of them are in great heart, with the happy sense that their toil and their sufferings have not been in vain.

We reach Amarah about 3 p.m. of the following day. Our Red Cross Headquarters

are in one of a long row of well-built brick houses facing the river front. At the back is a large general store full of Red Cross comforts of every kind. The walls and roof are of reed matting, which is practically the only material procurable for the construction of so large a depository as we require. It is horribly inflammable, but we can only hope that the incendiary history of Beit Muir will not repeat itself here.

Amarah is very beautiful. It is a characteristic Arab town, but surprisingly free from architectural monstrosities. It is built at the junction of the Tigris and the Chuhaleh canal, which in volume is here little less than the Tigris itself. The long reach on which our house is situated might well have formed a subject for Canaletto's brush. In the foreground is a jumble of Arab craft crowded on the waterway. The quays are packed with figures, and behind them rises a long line of Arab houses, over which towers here and there a lofty minaret shaded by the feathery fronds of the inevitable palm tree. At

sunset all things are suffused in a brilliant amethyst glow! Unusual and singularly beautiful. At Amarah I am uncommonly fortunate in having as guide, philosopher and friend Dr. W., a celebrated London physician, and now a "Colonel Consultant," doing great work for the Army and the country; with him I visit every (I think) medical unit in the place. British and Indian General Hospitals, Convalescent Homes (for British officers and men respectively), the Isolation Hospital, as well as the Cemetery, the "Sanitary Contrivance Exposition" and the Remount Camps. It is curious to observe how great a difference—even to a layman's eye—there is in these various institutions. Some of them are more advantageously situated than others in the matter of site, some in the actual buildings in which they are housed, some, again, have a numerically stronger staff of Nursing Sisters. Here let me say again how remarkable and apparent is the influence of a capable nursing staff in the wards of a hospital. I rejoice

to know that several of the excellent hospitals which I saw at Amarah, and which have since then been sent to Baghdad, have taken their Nursing Sisters with them. They have also in every case taken with them a very goodly supply of Red Cross comforts. In this case wisdom will certainly be justified of her children !

I am glad to say that the site of the Amarah Convalescent Home for Officers is to be changed. It is to abandon the mosquito-infected and swampy garden to which it has hitherto been relegated, and is to take up its abode in a block of roomy buildings which had been marked down as G.H.Q.

I should have liked to see also the men's Convalescent Home transferred to a happier entourage, but no suitable site appears to be forthcoming. A new Recreation Hut is promised, however, and I know that our local representative has his eye on both these institutions, and is ready to meet in no niggardly spirit any appeal that may be

made to him to render more attractive the environment of the inmates of the Amarah Convalescent Homes.

In every hospital there is a Red Cross store-room, which is cherished by every C.O. and every matron as a very important ingredient of efficiency in their ministration to the sick and wounded, and efficiency is —I may say—maintained at a very high level indeed throughout the various units, to whose working I was in every case allowed to gain a full insight.

Some taint, some reproach is incidental to all human work! With this proviso I can state my honest conviction that by no human agency in the world could more be done for the welfare of our troops and the care of our sick and wounded than is being done to-day by the responsible officers concerned. I am equally convinced that they, on their part, would not hesitate to acknowledge their vast indebtedness to the Joint Committee in England, and to the many voluntary agencies in India for the prodigi-

ous quantities of comforts of every kind which have been poured out with a lavish hand to supplement Government issues, generous as the scale may be on which such issues are made.

## CHAPTER XI

### UP STREAM

MONDAY, *March* 5. A telegram from the Army Commander bids me join him up river with all speed. Leaving Moens to "mind the shop," Stanley and I board P. 54 as she steams past Amarah on a non-stop mission to the front. Away we go past Sheikh Saad, where we pack our barges to their fullest capacity with a strong contingent of the "Gippy"[1] Labour Corps bound for Aziziyeh, past Sandy Ridge, now deserted save for a small camp of men engaged in filling up trenches, burying the dead and generally tidying up; past Kut, now an empty shell. The houses have long ago been denuded of all woodwork, doors, windows and shutters to strengthen the Sanna-i-yat dug-outs. No sign of life, save of cats! Hundreds

[1] Egyptian.

of these poor, mangy, miserable things miowling and prowling round the empty streets and hovels in search of any garbage that may stave off starvation. We steam past Dahra Barracks and the now historic Bend of Shumran, till on Friday morning we find ourselves almost (seemingly) in the very shadow of the great arch of Ctesiphon. As we pass, a company of Indian soldiers in khaki is marching under its walls, looking like very pigmies and forcing us to appreciate the immensity of its size.

At 9.30 a.m. our course is stayed in midstream for six hours by a bridge of boats, over which a ceaseless stream of troops and guns, A.T. carts and ambulances is passing from the left to the right bank. Vast clouds of dust in the far distance mark the movements of large bodies of troops. A constant boom of guns is heard Baghdadwards. Evidently a fight is on. About 4 p.m. the Bridge is opened to let us through, and round the next bend we find P. 53, and receive a cordial greeting from Sir Stanley

Maude. We pitch our tents within a stone's throw of the ship and await events.

News comes in from the Diala River. The story of the crossing is so simple but so grand an epic that I venture to tell it as it was told to me.

At the salient formed by the junction of the River Tigris, flowing in from the North-West with the River Diala from the North-East, and along the northern bank of either stream, is a scattered row of mud hovels forming the Diala village. Some hundred yards up the Diala there used to be a Bridge of Boats, now destroyed, but the site of the old Bridge was the point selected for the crossing of our left-hand landing-party.

At 10 p.m. on the night of *March* 7 the disposition of the troops was as follows: The South Lancs (some two hundred strong) held a ridge which was parallel to the Diala River and commanded the stream. Immediately in rear of the ridge came from left to right —the North Lancs, with their left flank on the bank of the Tigris, the King's Own Liver-

pool Regiment in the centre, and the East Lancs on the right. Volunteers to row the pontoons over were called for from the whole force. The men responded with alacrity. Not one of them but knew that it was a forlorn hope for which he offered himself. He was "for it" all the same! At midnight the first attempt was made to cross the Diala by the K.O. Liverpool Regiment. The pontoons pushed off and into a very hell-fire of shell fire. The Turks knew the range to a yard. The rowers were shot down, the men in the pontoons were shot or drowned; every boat was swept away! None landed. None came back! Again and again volunteers were called for. Again and again they came forward without a moment's hesitancy. Each man knew that it was to certain death, but he was "for it" all the same! At 1.30 a.m. another attempt was made with the same splendid gallantry as before. But success was not yet to be ours, and at 2.30 a.m. the whole line fell back to where their transport column was bivouacked.

*March* 8 was a day of quiet, but as soon as darkness fell the North Lancs moved up to the position which they had occupied at ten o'clock the previous night. They advanced in four columns of companies, each one having its pontoon. On the left C Company, under Captain Reid, got their pontoon across six times, and Reid found himself over on the Turkish bank with some sixty men. On his right B and D Companies had in two or three crossings got over about fifty men. Up to this moment the enemy's fire had not been heavy, but now it began in earnest. Reid soon found himself with only fifteen men left. His position was quite untenable, so he decided to move his little party up the river bank to join B Company. The latter had occupied a ruined house, which lent itself to defence better than the position which Reid and his men had originally taken up, and here they proceeded to "dig in." They were sixty in number. They had a Lewis gun, which was quickly out of gear, and in the way of ammunition two bombs

and one hundred and twenty rounds a man.

During the night the Turks made seven distinct attacks on Reid and his little band. At daybreak the attacks ceased, for with the coming of light our guns could put a barrage of fire across the front of the little British post and check any effort on the part of the Turks to rush the position. The attacks ceased, but here were the Lancashire lads absolutely cut off and subjected to a perpetual tornado of shell and rifle fire. As the day went on their store of cartridges dwindled and dwindled almost to vanishing-point, but still they " stuck it out " ! While daylight lasted it was impossible to convey to them ammunition or reinforcements. The Adjutant of the Regiment was shot dead as he tried to get across to his men. Reid's servant swam back with a message, and by some miracle got through unscathed, but the Turks' fire zone was practically impassable, and attempts to get ammunition by rockets from the ships or by grenades from the river

bank were quite unsuccessful. When night fell the men had scarcely a round of ammunition left. Their case seemed pretty desperate, and as the night wore on there came to them no sign of relief, but still they "stuck it out"! Events on the right bank had gone badly for the enemy all through that day, and he had come to the conclusion that we were not to be denied, and that the moment had come for him to quit.

At 4 a.m. on the morning of the 10th the men of the East Lancs got over the river practically unmolested. In less than no time a bridge was thrown over the Diala. The remainder of the Brigade moved across. Our men all joined up, and Baghdad was practically ours.

*Saturday, March* 10, was a day of tearing wind, growing in intensity throughout the day. At night a hurricane and dust-storm is raging, and life for the moment is unpleasant. Our launches have been hard at work all day. Yesterday's fight resulted in eight hundred casualties, and their evacuation

has been no easy task. They have had—poor fellows—a cruel drive of many miles in ambulances or carts over a rough and bumpy stretch of country to the river bank, some eight miles north of our camp. From here our launches have borne them down stream to the field ambulances just below our tents. At times the river has been lashed into the semblance of an angry sea, but our little boats have sped through the scum and the spray to and fro, to and fro, till by sundown they have brought the full tally of eight hundred to the haven where they fain would be.

A nice bit of work!

## CHAPTER XII

### BAGHDAD

With the crossing of the Diala our road is clear to the City of Baghdad, and at 9 a.m. on *Sunday*, *March* 11, we move off in solemn array. Monitors, gunboats and launches form our escort. Immediately ahead of us is the *Firefly*—the old British gunboat recently recaptured from the Turks and practically uninjured. We pass a goodly number of troops marching on the left bank parallel to our course. At about 3.30 p.m. we steam round a bend of the river, and Baghdad is in sight. At this point the Tigris is a vast waterway, and on either hand is a long line of Arab houses backed by groves of high date palms. The city as seen from the river is singularly picturesque, especially at sunrise or sunset. There is no path nor roadway, as at Amarah, between the houses and the stream. In normal

times the river swarms with boats of every kind, to which each house has access by a crazy wooden stairway leading down to the water's edge. For the moment, of course, there is an almost total disappearance of river craft. A few "mahelahs" and "gufas" only are left. There are no buildings of any magnitude or interest. The houses are all flat-roofed, and built for the most part on square and simple lines. Some of the modern European houses are florid and pretentious in design, and in structure as gimcrack as you please. On either bank crowds have gathered to watch our entry. They are singularly undemonstrative for the most part, though here and there we are greeted by a vigorous outburst of handclapping and waving of flags.

We flatter ourselves that we are a very imposing Fleet. Monitors and gunboats precede us, and they go on up stream, while we come to anchor and are moored alongside the British Residency. Above it floats once more the Union Jack, flanked by a Red Cross

flag, for the Residency is in use as a hospital. There are many Turkish wounded—very badly wounded—in the wards ! Oh ! so foul and filthy ! All of them clamouring for food. The British Consulate in rear is also in use as a hospital, but a fleeting glimpse and a fleeting smell are quite enough.

Ninety-five of our wounded come in just as we arrive. They are soon made quite comfortable in the upper storey of the Residency, and get away down stream on the following day.

There is an hour's daylight, so we sally forth to inspect the town. Vendors of oranges and flyblown dates dog our footsteps. Peripatetic poulterers, grasping in one hand a bunch of skinny, squawky fowls, and in the other a box of venerable-looking eggs, press their doubtful wares upon us. Later on our cook establishes his right to wear the *cordon bleu* of his profession by serving up a *vol-au-vent de volaille* of surpassing tastiness, backed by a tinned plum-pudding which has made its way to Baghdad in the

innermost recesses of my sleeping-bag! Thus do we fare sumptuously as befits conquering heroes, but we turn in betimes, for the Army Commander is an early bird and begins his day's work regularly at 5 a.m.

Some half-dozen of us sleep on the bridge of P. 53. It is an airy dormitory and somewhat noisy, but we need no rocking, and sleep contentedly till dawn. We are up and get a walk before breakfast, which is at 7 a.m. In the Residency grounds are some new arrivals, travel-stained and clamouring for a tub!

"Had a tough time?" I ask.

"Toughish!" is the cheery reply. "Our emergency rations were finished the night before last! Yesterday we'd nothing to eat all day, and not much to drink, and five-and-twenty miles to march! But we got to Baghdad all right! You bet!"

Are we down-hearted?

Breakfast over, I sally forth house-hunting with one who has authority to pass anywhere and everywhere. Houses are wanted for

the Army Commander, of course, as well as for "A" and "Q" and many other. But none of these is "my pigeon!" I am out for the Red Cross, and by the kindness of Dame Fortune and the amiability of the Staff officer whose peculiar province is the allotment of mansions, I secure the old Tigris Hotel—an ideal home for our representative, with ample room for the whole of our Staff and our Stores. It is very conveniently situated on the river front. The house is roomy and well built, with a great big vaulted hall, cool and dark, well below ground level, in which during the summer days the fierceness of the heat will—let us hope—be tempered and less intolerable than in the upper regions.

It has a large flat roof on which every one will sleep at night, and between the house and the river is a charming little garden with a broad pergola of vines and some fig trees of heavy foliage casting a luscious shade! In our wanderings we are initiated into the mysteries of many Arab households. Our

landlord receives us with utmost courtesy, and treats us to Turkish coffee (very savoury) and Turkish cigarettes (very much the reverse !). He is an old gentleman with very fair complexion, bluish-grey eyes and snow-white hair, whose portrait might well be that of any dour occupant of the manse of Glen Kells !

House-hunting ended, there are many sights to see. It is interesting, in the first place, to see what destruction has been wrought in the city. There was evidently no intention on the part of the enemy to leave anything intact that could be of the slightest possible use to us. The Railway rolling stock has disappeared. The electric light installation has been destroyed. The landing-stages have been wrecked, and the cranes reduced by fire to a tangle of twisted scrap-iron. The bridge of boats has vanished. An excellent newly-built mill just above the citadel has been burnt to the ground, as also a fine Government school, whose destruction would seem to be mere vandalism. An

English company's office and the manager's house—fine and costly buildings of recent construction—have been blown up. A few European houses, belonging for the most part to Germans, have been looted and wrecked by Arab marauders. But the whole of the city is practically intact. The Government Offices, the Citadel and the Barracks are all standing, though with the departure of the troops the scallywags of the city have broken into them all and ransacked every room. Nothing is left that could be of value to any one. In the Citadel the Small Arms Factory is undestroyed, but the central square is strewn with wreckage. Burnt motor-cars stand in rows. Shells and fuses are scattered in dire confusion. Everywhere are signs of hurried flight.

The Bazaar is a long, winding alley. It is roofed throughout, and, consequently, very dark and airless. Shops are on either side, but every shop is empty. Every door and shutter is torn down and carried away. Nothing is exposed for sale. The

Arabs have swept the whole place bare of any and every thing that could be removed. The Bazaar is crowded ! All the Arab and Jew world is out to see what is doing. The streets are filthy ! The crowd ill-smelling and unpleasing of aspect. Baghdad boils are much in evidence, and one is made painfully aware of the prevalence of disease. It is good to escape into the open air and leave behind the fetid smells and repulsive sights which we have had with us in our first introduction to the city life of Baghdad.

In what was recently the Russian Consulate there is an excellent Hotel. I am assured that both the provender and the prices are quite tiptop !

I take an early opportunity to visit the Turkish Military Hospital, which is situated just above the Citadel and is almost outside the town. There is a large enclosure, round the outside of which are dotted at intervals high, roomy wards, well built and well designed for the purposes of a hospital. Within the ring of buildings is a large, well-kept

garden. The departure of the Turks meant also the departure of all the sick and wounded that were deemed to be fit to travel, to the number, it is said, of some fifteen thousand ! There were three or four hundred, however, whose wounds were such that they could not be moved. These unfortunates were left to the care of a Greek doctor and four French Sisters of Mercy. These did all that they possibly could do to minister to their suffering, but every ward-boy and medical servant had cleared off with all that they could lay their hands on. We arrived to find many of the men unwashed, unfed, untended. Not one of them could move. In some of the wards corpses were lying uncovered. In all of them the smells and the sights were indescribable. An Algerian, who had fought for the French in Belgium, told me in very corrupt French of his removal to Berlin and thence to Kermanshah, where he was forced to fight in the ranks of the Turkish Army. I could not stay for the rest of his story. The stench was too overpowering. I also

saw a Russian prisoner of war, but as he knew naught but Russian our greetings were limited to nods and grins.

Just at the time of my arrival there came also an I.M.S. officer, who for the moment was practically single-handed, with an Augean stable to cleanse. In a very short time his work was done, the wounded were all evacuated, and the Hospital itself made sweet and clean. I was glad to escape from that Hospital. It was a sad experience.

On another afternoon I ran up river some four miles in my motor launch to Khadimaine, which boasts rather a fine mosque. The dome and four very tall, slender minarets are heavily gilded, and below the gilding are very elaborate patterns in tiles of brilliant blue. The Mosque is only to be viewed piecemeal by peeps through the great doors. Entrance by the infidel is absolutely forbidden, and evidently his approach is resented. The houses of the town are built in hugger-mugger fashion right up to the walls of the Mosque itself, and the streets

are even narrower and filthier, if that be possible, than those of Baghdad. We have suddenly—quite suddenly—jumped into hot weather. The day has been almost oppressive, but the evening is deliciously cool. The sunset and the afterglow a dream of beauty! And now the moment has come for me to turn my face southwards again. I have installed Major Stanley as my Deputy in one of the finest houses in the city. The wires have been at work, and already four hundred cases of Red Cross comforts are on their way up stream. A storeman, a clerk and three servants are also on their road. I have had several discussions with the military "powers that be" as to the programme for the summer months, and I am able to lay down a Red Cross policy to dovetail in with the arrangements which the D.M.S. has in view. I say farewell to my exceedingly kind host, and find myself once again in my old quarters on board P. 56.

## CHAPTER XIII

### DOWN STREAM

A PARTY of six officers and over two hundred men are expected. One corner of the deck is screened off with canvas "Kanats" for the officers, and we may peep inside before they come on board. Half a dozen cots are made up with snow-white sheets and pillow-cases, and over the foot of each bed is a soft plaid rug. By each bedside is a small table on which are set out books, magazines, chocolates, pipes, tobacco, cigarettes and matches, all provided by the Red Cross. Dressing-gowns, bed-jackets, clean shirts, pyjamas, vests, socks and handkerchiefs are there in abundance, as well as hot-water bottles and other comforts, such as Brand's Essence, Liebig's Oxo (specially given by the makers), Benger's Food, biscuits and tinned fruits. All of these are from the same "Pandora's box"!

The men come on board towards evening.

For many days now they have been marching and fighting, fighting again and marching again, with mighty little rest. They are unshaved, travel-stained and dirty. Very footsore, very tired—almost too tired to tackle the jorum of hot cocoa which is ready for them as they come on board.

The little Doctor is bustling round seeing to every man's needs. Two Army Sisters are there, ministering to all and sundry; and there is an ample staff of trained orderlies, both British and Indian. In the morning clean shirts or pyjamas are served out from the Red Cross Stores, as well as razors, soap, tooth-brushes and powder, hair-brushes, slippers and writing material (in great demand). A night's rest, a wash, a shave and a hearty breakfast, and lo! the man of yesterday, a thing of dirt, dust and dejection, is to-day alive and alert—a soldier! clean, confident and cheerful.

We leave at 6 a.m. and are at Sheikh Saad in thirty hours. Here we drop some light cases and take on some very bad

stretcher cases bound for Basrah. At Amarah I rejoin Moens, and spend another week completing my round of inspection of all the medical units, and mapping out our plan of campaign for the summer months. We settle the demarcation of each sphere of operations, the scope of Red Cross activities in each one, the distribution of the personnel, the quantities of stores and comforts to be ordered, the method of their supply and control, and the system of transportation and distribution.

In all this we have to look more and more to the Indian Branch of the Joint War Committee and less and less to Pall Mall, having regard to the ever-growing menace to sea-going ships.

Luckily this change of the source of our supply will not weaken us, nor diminish in the slightest degree the efficiency of our organization. Sir Pardey Lukis, our Indian Chairman, is just a tower of strength! I have made endless demands on him for supplies of every kind. He has met them

unfailingly. I have burdened him with work. He has shouldered the burden uncomplainingly. I have made inconsiderate encroachments on his time. He has welcomed me as a guest when he might have warned me off as a trespasser. I thank him heartily for his invaluable help.

On *Saturday, March* 24, I step aboard our Red Cross Launch, the *Wessex*, and slip down to Kurnah. It is a very hot day; there is a fierce glare off the water. The river is bank high, and we meet numerous mahelahs being towed up stream. All of them are heavily laden, and it is a wonder to me to see how few men will keep a big, heavily loaded mahelah going against a five-knot current and make steady progress all through the day.

By 5 p.m. we are comfortably bestowed in the Hospital at Kurnah. It is set in the midst of a thick belt of palms, and the camp is intersected by winding nullahs, of which some are dry and some are filled with a stagnant, green, soupy fluid that is sug-

gestive of fever and other jungly horrors. A number of reed huts of picturesque design are dotted here and there, crowded in close and cosy companionship with a number of E.P. tents. The effect is fantastic and unreal. Surely this is Fairyland, the Forest Home of some evil genii beautiful and bad! Surely the broad arrow yonder and the letters O.C. carved roughly on a tree-trunk point to the Ogre's Cave! Bull frogs which would hold their own with the Christmas monsters of Drury Lane croak savagely from every pool, and huge dragonflies recall the splendid antics of our aviators on the Western Front.

A kingfisher in gaudiest garb of sapphire blue darts through the trees. There is a whirr of tiny trumpetings and a cloud of mosquitoes is upon us—big, burly fellows that dance like dervishes about our necks and faces, and dispel any illusions as to Kurnah being aught save of the earth earthy. The sun is sinking, and we move away to the Euphrates, which joins the Tigris hard by

our camp. Between its banks of palm groves far as the eye can reach the great river rolls towards us out of the crimson west, a flood of molten gold.

*Sunday, March* 25.—A glorious hot morning. I am out early, and wander leisurely along the Euphrates, and am lost in wonder at the quantity, the variety, and the beauty of the bird life! We stop to watch an Arab hauling himself up the rough trunk of a palm tree to propagate the flower with male pollen, which he carries in a little bag at the end of a stick some ten to fifteen inches long. The canvas of which the bag is made is of open mesh, so that a gentle shake releases a little shower of dust-like pollen, and the deed of propagation is done.

This is a strange country. There are no stones in it. There are no forest trees in it. There are no bees in it. So the dates are barren unless resort is had to artificial propagation, and the process which I have just described is universal.

We have a look at a very substantial hospital that is under construction, and realize that its inmates will be very comfortably housed when all is done, and then we slip away down stream. There are lots of wild duck in every reach of the river, but they are very wild indeed, and, though we lighten our cartridge-bag considerably, yet we have no plump mallards wherewith to replenish the larder.

Just as we reach Basrah our steering gear goes "fut." We are brought to an ignominious halt, and have to finish our journey in a humble "balum." The Khandak creek is packed with river craft of all kinds, and the jamb and jostle of the boats, and the jabber and gesticulations of the boatmen, remind me of Henley on regatta day. We are greeted by the news that P. 56, the boat which I have grown to regard with paternal affection, almost with a sense of ownership, has been burnt. The catastrophe was purely accidental, and fortunately occurred when no wounded were on board.

The engines are intact, but four or five men have been drowned, and it will be at least a month before she will be fit for service again.

On arrival at our Red Cross Depot I find that the repair-shop is now completed, and so fully equipped that we ourselves will be able to carry out any repair work that it may be necessary to take in hand.

## CHAPTER XIV

### NAZARIYEH

The following night sees us travelling in a very ancient "Southern Mahratta" railway carriage bumping and grinding over the desert by the newly-made line to Nazariyeh. It takes us fifteen hours to accomplish the 150 miles (we can do better than that on the L. & N.W.R. !). I breakfast at 11.30 with the G.O.C., who is an old friend. The Arabs, it appears, have their own names for distinguished persons with whom they become familiar. Our host's sobriquet is "Father of Lions." It is not unfair to assume that they have heard him roar. He will shortly be roaring at the Gates of Baghdad, for simultaneously with our arrival is that of a telegram ordering him thither with the bulk of his force.

There are two hospitals to be seen here, one in the brick-built Turkish Barracks and one in tents.

After their inspection I go shopping in the Bazaar, whither I am accompanied by the "Mayor," if you please! a very dignified old Arab who has been exalted to this right worshipful position. With him are two of his Town Councillors, to whom my insistence on buying *old* copper pots is quite unintelligible and—I fear—a cause of offence!

At two o'clock we start in motor-cars, with an escort of motor-bikers in case of audacious and malevolent snipers, for Ur of the Chaldees. We buzz along over quite a practicable road which is of British construction. This is one of the many activities of my friend the G.O.C. Road-making, bank-building to restrain the floods, sanitation, housing, hutting, lighting, watering, burying, and general cleaning up of the community. A good year's record! And here we are at Ur. I last came across Ur in the Book of Genesis, and I realize that I am in touch with that which was six thousand years ago! Now it is a vast

sand-covered mound. A few ruined walls, built of bricks which emerged from the kiln many centuries ago, stand out above the dust of ages. Sea-shells, broken sherds, odds and ends of pottery, traces of stone-built tombs! All these things prompt the desire to dig and delve, and open the halls and corridors once trodden by the feet of Father Abraham himself.

We motor back as the sun goes down, but there is just time to jump into a launch and see the river front touched by the last rays of the setting sun. It is a beautiful picture, which fades all too soon! Night falls, and I am once again in my railway carriage, creeping back slowly towards Basrah. A few more hours and my sojourn in the Land of the Two Rivers is ended. By good fortune, the *Madras* is about to return to India with a moderate number of patients, and there is room for me. I avail myself with alacrity of the opportunity to repeat my wholly delightful experience of a few weeks ago.

## CHAPTER XV

### "ALL ABOARD"

I SAY "Good-bye" to Basrah with infinite regret, but before I go I have secured for our staff ample accommodation in houses well built and conveniently situated.

At Amarah, too, the house is now ours which adjoins our original and somewhat cramped premises. Our men, therefore, may now contemplate the approach of the hot weather with the assurance that they will live and move and have their being under conditions far less trying to health and strength than those under which they spent last summer.

In this graceful concession on the part of the military authorities I detect a fresh recognition of our Red Cross organization as an integral part of the great branch of the Army which is concerned with the care of the sick and wounded, and a fresh proof of the happy relations which exist between the two.

*Friday, March* 30.—We are on board at ten o'clock and away before noon. We have a handful of British officers and men, a goodly number of Indian officers and men, and over one hundred Turkish prisoners. The wounds of many of the latter are very serious and very septic. The devotion of our doctors to their healing brings the reward of painful septic throats and no little consequent misery. I am constantly in and out of the wards, sometimes in the day, sometimes

> "When the night is still and deep,
> And the drowsy heave of Ocean
> Mutters in its charmèd sleep,"

and I am strengthened in my conviction that nothing is left undone on board the *Madras* which skill and care and devotion can achieve for the welfare of the sick and wounded—no matter what their rank or what the colour of their skin may be.

*Wednesday, April* 4.—We reach Karachi in the morning. Our progress is leisurely,

for mine-sweeping operations have to be concluded before ships are allowed to come into the harbour. It is noon before we are tied up alongside the Quay, though we might have got in very much sooner, if steaming was the only thing to be considered. A hot day and dry! Karachi's annual rainfall is three inches.

The A.D.M.S. very kindly takes me in tow and carries me off in his motor to No. 1 Indian Hospital (recently at Bournemouth). A splendid building, the Karachi Port Trust Offices, well adapted for the purpose and beautifully equipped. There are three floors, with a lift in the centre.

The hospital is in a semicircular building, from the middle of which a rectangular block runs back for some distance.

The hospital is divided into two sides, medical and surgical. Administrative offices, X-ray, operating rooms, etc., are in the Central Block. The annexe to this hospital is very sumptuously bestowed in the offices of McKinnon, Mackenzie & Co. This is a

magnificent building, with great wide staircases and corridors, and lofty marble halls which make beautiful wards, replete with every comfort and convenience. To both these hospitals, especially when the original installation was in process, gifts of every kind have been contributed by the St. John Ambulance and the Sind Women's War Work Depot in generous measure.

We then motor to the Sind Women's War Work Depot, which is now affiliated *qua* Red Cross work with the Indian Branch of the Joint War Committee. These very capable ladies have done and are doing great things in the way of war gifts to the troops in Mesopotamia, as well as to the sick and wounded.

Thence to the old Artillery Barracks, now No. 37 B.G.H. The Barracks form only the nucleus of the hospital; the majority of the patients, the operating theatre and X-ray rooms (contiguous), the infectious cases and tubercular cases being housed in very well appointed, up-to-date huts. The

design, the arrangement of the theatre and X-ray rooms, and the mechanical plant and contrivances, are the most ingenious, complete and convenient that I have ever seen.

Then back by motor six miles to the Docks, and away. Karachi is evidently like Madras—a city of magnificent distances!

## CHAPTER XVI

### BOMBAY

We reach Bombay at noon on Good Friday, nine weeks almost to a day from the time that I left.

At Bombay and Karachi marvellous changes have been wrought in the matter of hospital accommodation, and all that appertains to the care and the cure of our sick and wounded soldiers and camp followers. At Bombay there is a hospital at Calaba for British officers and men, which has been subjected to many recent alterations and brought up to date in all administrative matters, and hard by is a Home for sick Nursing Sisters. The new museum has been adapted as a hospital for Indian officers and men. Its vast marble halls and corridors lend themselves admirably for use as hospital wards, and temporary buildings have been erected in rear of the museum, where the

administrative block, the theatre and various wards—infectious and otherwise—are housed.

This is known as the Lady Hardinge Hospital, and is beautifully equipped and replete with every comfort. The same may be said of the "Freeman Thomas Hospital" near by. The buildings in which this hospital for British soldiers is lodged were intended as science schools attached to the Bombay University. They are only just attaining completion; indeed, when it was taken over for its present purpose the construction of the building was not so far advanced but that extensive alterations and adaptations were feasible to make it as it is to-day, as good as any hospital may be in the matter of design, structure and equipment. Recently the Gaekwad of Baroda's Palace has been equipped and opened for British officers. It is the last word in sybaritic sumptuousness. If there is aught in environment many a wounded warrior will here be wooed back to convalescence by the very beauty of his

luxurious surroundings. Away at Dadar a chain of excellent wards is in course of erection, wherein the sick of the Indian Labour Corps will be lodged and cared for as they were never lodged and cared for before. There are several other hospitals of excellent repute, but I only speak of those which I personally visited. I visited three Convalescent Homes at Coonoor, and the number is to be extended to five, with a total capacity of five thousand beds.

Wonderful indeed is the provision made, not only in the Karachi and Bombay hospitals, which I am able from personal inspection to describe, but throughout India, for the welfare of the sick. Much is of recent consummation. But there it is to-day —ample in quantity, admirable in quality, whether in the matter of administration, or of professional skill and devotion, or of equipment and those extra things which come under the category of "comforts."

It is impossible for me to exaggerate the degree to which Lady Willingdon, and the

very capable Committees associated with her in the Bombay Presidency War Works of various kinds, have contributed to this consummation. Bombay may indeed be proud of her hospitals, and not only of them, but of all that she has done for our soldiers, either in the fighting line through the War Gifts Committee, or in hospital through the Red Cross organization.

No record of Red Cross work in Mesopotamia and India would be complete without reference to what has been done in our Bombay depot under Major Hepper. The collection and distribution of stores in abundance to Indian Hospitals, to Hospital Ships and Ambulance Trains has been conducted on a very large scale. During my sojourn in the Tigris Valley, Major Hepper must have been well-nigh "snowed up" by the requisitions of inordinate length with which I bombarded him. The accuracy with which my every indent was met was only equalled by the promptitude with which the goods were despatched. His work,

however, did not begin and end with "comforts."

A Sub-Committee has been formed to deal with "Wounded and Missing" inquiries, another for providing amusements and entertainments and recreation. Both these Committees work hand-in-hand with the Y.M.C.A. Other Committees concern themselves with "outings" for convalescents, either in the Harbour in launches lent with profuse generosity by shipping companies, or in the environs of Bombay in motor-cars either hired or lent by private owners. These "joy rides," which often include picnics and tea-parties, are immensely popular. The preliminary organization necessary to ensure their success is considerable, and their popularity bears testimony to its excellence.

Major Hepper's call to other important service entails the relinquishment of his Red Cross work, but luckily we have found a very capable successor in Mr. Arthur Davies, who will give the whole of his time to Red Cross work.

Not in Bombay alone, but indeed throughout the length and breadth of India, the work which has been done, not only by the Order of St. John and the British Red Cross Society united under Sir Pardey Lukis's able direction, but also by the many and various voluntary agencies, has been simply magnificent.

Since the formation of the Indian Branch of the Joint War Committee much has been accomplished in the co-ordination of Red Cross activities in India and the prevention of overlapping. As elsewhere, the Joint Committee works in close co-operation with the military authorities and in consultation with them. A Red Cross representative has been appointed at the Headquarters of each Division, Divisional Area, or independent Brigade, and a uniform system of indenting for Red Cross stores has been adopted throughout India. Most of the organizations doing Red Cross work are affiliated to or work in conjunction with the Joint War Committee, and negotiations

are now proceeding to link up with the remainder.

I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that, whatever may have happened in 1915 and 1916, whatever the blunders may have been, whatever the deficiencies may have been in Mesopotamia, yet there is to-day no army in the world whose soldiers are better fed, better clothed, and better cared for, be they hale and hearty or be they sick and sorry, than those fighting under Sir Stanley Maude, who has proved himself to be no less able an Administrator than he is a brave and brilliant General. He has borne spontaneous testimony to the value of the Red Cross work which Major Moens and his little band of brothers have achieved.

## CHAPTER XVII

### ALL'S WELL

For the moment all is well with our gallant force in the Tigris Valley. But the hot weather is upon them, with its attendant horrors; and once more our Mesopotamia Army is confronted with all the evils incidental to a summer campaign in the Tigris Valley—the evils of heat like that of a furnace; of flies, of mosquitoes, and other abominations of insect life unknown in this northern clime of ours; the evils of fever, of dysentery, of scurvy, and all the other ills to which Oriental flesh is heir; of dust and thirst and ennui. But our Army to-day will look those evils in the face undaunted and undismayed. The clouds of doubt and distrust which twelve months ago darkened the horizon and quenched the spirit of our soldiers have been swept away. The men are in great

heart. They know that they are going to win through. They know that their leaders will look carefully to their well-being, that England is alive to the magnitude of the task to which she has put her hand, and is resolved that not again shall the sinews of war be withheld. And this they know also —that beyond the Generals and the Staff, beyond the Government and the War Office there is the great British Public, big-hearted and generous, who have made the work of caring for the sick and wounded their own special concern. The task has been entrusted to Red Cross hands, and with that arrangement Thomas Atkins is well content.

# APPENDIX

## RED CROSS WORK IN MESOPOTAMIA

During the year 1915 large consignments of Hospital necessaries, clothing, and comforts were despatched to Mesopotamia by the Indian Council of the St. John Ambulance Association. For the transport of sick and wounded, motor boats, ambulance flats and launches were specially constructed in Calcutta and sent over to Basrah.

Monthly supplies for the equipment and furnishing of the Hospitals at Amara, and of Mobile Laboratories on the Tigris, were provided by the same organization, and Lieut.-Colonel Jay Gould was appointed to be the representative of the Order and of the British Red Cross Society in Mesopotamia.

### Basrah

General.—It was in April 1916 that the Advance Guard of the British Red Cross Unit, under the command of Mr. E. A.

Ridsdale, British Red Cross Commissioner, arrived in Mesopotamia.

Prior to this date Lieut.-Colonel Jay Gould, I.M.S., had been acting as Commissioner for the Indian Branch of the St. John Ambulance Association and distributing comforts to the Hospital units, while three motor launches, sent out by the British Red Cross Society in 1915—the *Wessex*, *Alouette* and *Olinda*—had been doing valuable work on the Shatt-el-arab.

At Basrah the Base Depot was in charge of Lieut.-Colonel Jay Gould, I.M.S., Commissioner for the Indian St. John Ambulance Association.

An Advance Depot was started under Major Moens at Amarah—about 150 miles up the Tigris from Basrah.

The total strength of the Red Cross unit in Mesopotamia is eight officers and sixty-four men, together with a considerable number of native followers and coolies. Our casualties have been heavy, some 57 per cent. of our men having been invalided home.

STORES.—In spite of the difficulties experienced in the early stages on account of lack of accommodation and other facilities, it is worthy of note that on April 27, 1916 several large indents from Hospitals were complied with, so that no time was lost in getting to work. Orders were at once given to a local contractor for the erection of huts for quarters and stores on a portion of the ground occupied by the Barracks about half a mile down a tidal creek known as Khandak Creek.

These huts, however, were not completed until early in June, and the large stores hut not until the beginning of August. The stores had to be stacked in the open in their original cases, thus throwing an enormous amount of extra work on the Staff, as every case had to be opened and re-secured for every requisition dealt with.

The area dealt with by the Base Depot extends down river to Mohammerah—a Persian town on the Karun River—twenty-six miles below Basrah, where there are two

large Convalescent Depots of 1000 beds each; and thence 160 miles up the Karun River to Ahwaz, near to the Anglo-Persian Oil Fields. Up river at a distance of about forty miles is Kurnah, notorious for its mosquitoes and the reputed site of the Garden of Eden. Here there is a combined Stationary Hospital of 250 beds situated at the junction of the Euphrates and the Tigris; while some 200 miles up the main stream of the Euphrates is Nazariyeh, where are the Field Ambulances, a Stationary Hospital and a Casualty Clearing Station.

Not only has the Base Depot to comply with the requisitions made upon it by the Hospital units in this large area—units with accommodation for over 14,000 patients —but it also has to keep the Advanced Depot at Amarah supplied with stores sufficient to cope with a still larger medical area.

These stores are sent up to Amarah in large shallow draught sailing boats or "mahelahs," which take from ten to eighteen

days for the 150 miles journey, according to whether the winds are favourable or the reverse. It is a slow and cumbersome method of transport, but it has two distinct advantages: (1) it throws no additional strain upon the now highly organized River Steamer Transport System; (2) these "mahelahs," with their Arab crews and their extremely shallow draught, can negotiate without much difficulty the numerous sandbanks and shallows of the Tigris in its low water season.

A fire took place in the Stores Department on June 23, 1916, and over £11,000 worth of stores were destroyed—a loss which would undoubtedly have been far greater had not the men stationed at the time in the barracks coped with the situation promptly and efficiently. Another fire took place on the night of 1/2 October, 1916, at the building occupied by the Base Medical Stores Depot, where the Red Cross Officers had their quarters and offices. Although considerable office material was burnt, the loss was mainly one of personal kit and property,

and all important books and papers were saved.

The following figures taken at random from the list of Red Cross gifts issued from the Base Depot may prove of interest :—

| Quantities issued. | Goods. | Quantities issued. | Goods. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1,756 | Blankets | 261 | Primus Stoves |
| 203 cases | Books | 34,356 | Pyjamas |
| 1,089 large bots. | Calves' Foot Jelly | 3,699 | Razors |
| | | 6,178 | Sheets |
| 8,270 | Cardigans | 33,034 | Shirts |
| 2,150 lbs. | Chocolate | 12,048 | Slippers |
| 3,225,150 | Cigarettes | 34,591 | Tablets Soap |
| 8,788 lbs. | Extract of Meat | 32,985 pairs | Socks |
| | | 22,106 lbs. | Sweets |
| 49,234 | Fans | 5,130 lbs. | Tobacco Indian |
| 9,263 | Goggles | 1,214 lbs. | Tobacco British |
| 24,569 bots. | Horlick's Milk | 11,021 | Toothbrushes |
| 70,548 tins | Milk | 75 cases | Tooth Sticks |
| 12,761 | Mosquito Nets | 10,596 | Towels |
| 8,116 yards | Mosquito Netting | 20,172 | Vests |
| | | 3,193 yards | Waterproof Sheeting |
| 3,478 | Pillows | | |
| 10,006 | Pipes | | |

The Wounded and Missing Inquiry Bureau has been conducted by Lieut. E. V. Salcombe, who had carried out the same work for some time in Malta, and he has been assisted by Viscount Tamworth.

The Amarah Depot was started in the

beginning of May 1916. Amarah is a town of 20,000 inhabitants, composed of Arabs, Jews, Christians, Chaldæans, Kurds and Sabbæans, of whom Arabs are in the vast majority. It is situated at the junction of the Tigris and the Chahala Canal, about 150 miles above Basrah, and has Hospital accommodation for 7,800 beds.

The Red Cross secured for its Depot a large house on the left bank of the Tigris with a river frontage—admirably situated for the loading, unloading and distribution of its goods.

Very soon additional storage room had to be found, for the Depot soon had to cope with very large demands upon its resources, not only from Amarah itself, but also from all the Hospital units along the long lines of communication from Amarah to the front, a distance of about 200 miles by river.

First, there were three permanent Defence Posts with Post Hospitals of Mudelil, Filai Filah and Ali Gherbi, and in addition six other smaller marching posts with Medical

Detention Tents and *personnel.* These were all between Amarah and Sheikh Saad.

At Sheikh Saad—140 miles above Amarah and the river head of the "P" boats, there were two Stationary Hospitals, four Casualty Clearing Stations and one large Convalescent Camp—4000 beds in all—as well as smaller units such as Sanitary Sections, etc.

Between Sheikh Saad and the Sanna-i-yat position on the left bank and the Es Sinn position on the right bank, there were nineteen Field Ambulances—British, Indian and Combined—each one of which had 400 beds.

The medical area thus covered by the work of the Amarah Depot had accommodation in all for 20,920 patients.

Lastly, and on the whole the unit most in need of Red Cross comforts, is the River Sick Convoy Unit, which—exclusive of the H. S. *Sikkim* presented, staffed and provided for by the Madras Presidency—has 20 "P" boats under its control.

The Medical Officers in charge of these boats can obtain their Red Cross comforts of clothing or of food from the Red Cross "Dump" at river head or from the Amarah and Basrah Depots. They seldom fail to make a call at one or more of these sources of supply, for the increased comfort and well-being of their patients during the long river journey.

During the hot weather, from June to September, the Staff was much reduced by sickness, and at one time it looked as if it would vanish altogether. Brittain was the first to go. He died of cholera after a few hours only of illness. He was an indefatigable worker, whose loss was irreparable. Lieut. Reed stayed long enough with the Red Cross to make his transference to the Intelligence Staff very keenly felt. He had an intimate knowledge of the country, its customs and its languages, and Intelligence gained where Red Cross lost. Both of our Sergeants of the Regular Army were invalided to India at about this time, and the four

"P.B." men spent more time in Hospital than out. The timely arrival of Mr. Vigo in early September was most welcome, but after six weeks' valuable work at Amarah he, too, was invalided to India after a long sojourn in Hospital. Towards the end of October 1916 the Red Cross lost another valuable worker in Engineer Travers, who was accidentally drowned.

But all requisitions made upon the Red Cross were complied with, and as soon as the hot weather became a memory only the Staff was considerably strengthened, and is now stronger than ever it was.

The following is our method of distribution of our Stores:—

A revised list of available Red Cross comforts comprising over 200 items, from a toothpick to a Hospital ship, is sent every month to all the Medical Officers of each Division and on the lines of communication. The result is that every Officer commanding a medical unit in Mesopotamia is kept continuously in touch with the Red Cross as

a universal provider of comforts for the sick and wounded under his charge.

As soon as a requisition is received at the Depot—if it is a local one—the goods are loosely packed and taken away by the Hospital Staff. If it is an up-river requisition it is carefully packed and forwarded on the first available "P" boat bound for the North.

On several occasions the Red Cross, by keeping a fair reserve stock, both at Basrah and Amarah, of goods most in demand, has been able to bridge over a deficiency in Government Medical comforts—a deficiency in most cases temporary and local only, owing perhaps to the stranding of a "P" boat in the shallows of the Tigris, with the consequent blocking of the only available passage for other boats.

Of all work done by the Order of St. John and Red Cross in Mesopotamia that of the river launches has been unique, inasmuch as they alone have occupied this field of activity, and it is no exaggeration

to say that without this organization the Medical Service would have been seriously handicapped.

The supply of motor launches for carrying sick and wounded, hospital *personnel* and Red Cross stores represents the first phase of Red Cross work in Mesopotamia. In the Autumn of 1915 two launches, the *Alouette* and *Olinda*, were sent out; and in September of the same year, in response to a cable from General Nixon, a larger boat, the *Wessex*, capable of carrying as many as sixty sitting patients, was purchased. Owing to delays in shipment she did not arrive at Basrah until the end of December, and was put into commission immediately after arrival. At that time there were no other motor launches available in the country for the purpose, and for weeks on end the *Wessex* was running almost continuously day and night. Up to the end of January 1917 she had carried more than 15,000 sick and wounded, and is still in service carrying Red Cross stores, of which she has already transported more than

200 tons: sometimes over long distances, such as from Basrah to Amarah (150 miles) and Amarah to Arab Village (145 miles).

After the *Wessex* had been despatched, and further launches had been asked for by the Army Commander, I.E.F., "D" special launches were constructed designed for the specific purpose of carrying sick and wounded, whether sitting or stretcher cases. In all there are at present in Mesopotamia thirty-four launches provided by the British Red Cross Society, and it may fairly be said that all transport of sick and wounded that can be effected by motor launches is done by these thirty-four boats supplemented by the additional launches provided by the Indian Branch of the Order of St. John.

The boats have been in service at various points along the line of river communications from the base at Basrah up to the front—a distance of about 300 miles at the end of the period covered by the report. The work varies according to the locality. At Basrah, Amarah and Sheikh Saad the

launches are employed for the discharging of the sick and wounded from the River Sick Convoy Steamers to hospitals, the distributing of them from hospital to hospital according to circumstances, the visiting of marching posts and Post Hospital up and down river, and for the evacuation of patients, involving sometimes journeys of over 100 miles. At the front the launches have been utilised for carrying the sick and wounded from the advanced dressing stations just behind the trenches to the nearest field ambulances.

In addition to this work, certain small launches have been detailed for the conveyance of medical officers, who sometimes have to cover long distances in the course of their duties in districts where the only means of conveyance is by water. Besides this, Red Cross stores are transported from the depots to their destination by motor launches, and in this connection mention should be made of the *Silver Thimble VII*, located at Basrah, which, up to the end of

January 1917, had carried over 120 tons of stores.

The total number of sick and wounded carried by British Red Cross launches since the first boat arrived, up to January 31, 1917, was approximately 80,000, and the general utility of the boats can be gauged from the fact that the transport of sick and wounded, both main and subsidiary, is almost entirely by water. It should be added that in no part of the river is navigation easy, owing to the strong current, the narrow channels and the shifting sandbanks, whilst in some parts it is exceptionally difficult. Moreover, the launches make very long trips up to 250 miles under their own power, being almost the only vessels of their size to do so, and in view of these circumstances the proportion of casualties must be considered low.

All repairs to the boats have been effected by our own repairing engineers.

All the launches are manned by Red Cross drivers and engineers and are attached for duty to the medical authorities.

Two or three different types of launch are in service, according to the work for which they are intended; but the majority are forty-feet launches with a speed of eight to ten knots and one engine of from twenty to forty H.P. fitted right forward in a cabin just large enough to provide sleeping berths for the two drivers, who as a rule sleep in their boats. The rest of the launch is open. Ordinarily the accommodation is for thirty-six sitting cases, or eight stretcher and sixteen sitting cases; though as many as fifty-six sitting cases have actually been carried in one trip. Substantial double awnings and side curtains protect the patients from the terrific heat of the sun's rays in the summer months.

On many occasions the Red Cross launches have been instrumental in preventing what would otherwise have resulted in serious breakdowns in transport. In July and August of 1916, the *Florence Nightingale*, a Scottish Red Cross boat, was evacuating the sick from a certain area in Amarah,

starting at six a.m. and often not finishing work until long after midnight.

A British Red Cross River Hospital Ship for service on the Tigris has just been completed in Bombay and is already in commission on the Tigris. She will carry on board an exceptionally large ice-making machine plant, which alone will entitle her to her place in the sun, where ice is worth its weight in gold.

The Indian Order of St. John has also readily responded to the great demand for launches on the Tigris, for the evacuation of sick and wounded, and has actually nine launches and one hospital ship in commission doing yeoman service for the Red Cross in Mesopotamia.

To the British Red Cross Society and Order of St. John will always accrue the honour of having contributed in measure incalculable to the rescue and relief of the sick and wounded during the Mesopotamian Campaign.

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